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PROBABLE SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION TO MID-1952

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The intelligence organizations of the Department of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate, except for the reservation of the Director of Naval Intelligence noted on page 5.

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PROBABLE SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION TO MID-1952

THE PROBLEM

To estimate probable Soviet courses of action to mid-1952 with particular reference to the probability of direct hostilities between the US and the USSR.

ESTIMATE

I. Soviet Objectives

1. We believe that the ultimate Soviet objective is a Communist world dominated by the USSR and that the Kremlin believes its vital interests can be assured over the long run only by the elimination of all governments it cannot control. This objective probably reflects a Kremlin conviction that peaceful coexistence of the USSR and its empire on the one hand, and the US and its allies on the other, is impossible and that an armed conflict between them is eventually inevitable.

2. The principal immediate Soviet objectives evidently are:

a. To divide the West;

b. To prevent Western, West German, and Japanese rearmament;

c. To prevent implementation of the US overseas-bases policy.

3. We believe the USSR, in the pursuit of its objectives, will during the period of this estimate:

a. Seek to maintain an advanced state of war-readiness and offset any increase in the capabilities of the US and its allies;

b. Seek to prevent the development of any threat to the vital interests of the USSR or to Soviet control of the Satellites;

c. Seek to expand the territorial limits of the Soviet orbit;

d. Seek to undermine and secure control of governments not yet under Soviet domination;

e. Seek to force countries of the free world to adopt a policy of neutrality in the East-West struggle and to deny their resources, including strategic sites, to the US and its allies.

II. Military Considerations Underlying Soviet Action

4. We estimate that the armed forces of the USSR have the capability of overrunning continental Europe and the Near and Middle East (except India and Pakistan) within a relatively short period.

5. The USSR does not now have and would be unlikely to secure adequate naval forces or sufficient shipping to permit it to mount a successful invasion of the Western Hemisphere, even if it should seize the Eurasian continent and the UK.

6. The Soviet Air Force is capable of providing adequate tactical support of all ground campaigns which the USSR might launch against continental Europe and the Near and Middle East (except India and Pakistan), and simultaneously of attempting a strategic air offensive against the United Kingdom and the North American continent.

7. It is impossible to estimate with any accuracy the Kremlin's conclusion with regard to the relative effectiveness of Soviet and US atomic warfare capabilities or with regard to the relative importance of atomic and conventional weapons in determining the issue of a future general war. We believe it probable,

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however, that uncertainty concerning relative atomic warfare capabilities and concerning the effectiveness of atomic weapons in determining the issue of a general war will be a major, though not necessarily a decisive, deterrent to the Kremlin in making a decision to initiate or deliberately provoke a general war with the US during the period of this estimate.

8. The USSR is capable of employing sabotage against a variety of targets and of employing clandestine methods to attack the US and its allies with atomic, biological, and chemical weapons. We believe, however, that those capabilities would be exercised on an appreciable scale only in conjunction with or immediately preceding general military operations and that they would not be a decisive factor in any Soviet decision to initiate a general war.

III. Possible Soviet Courses of Action Without Intent to Precipitate or Incur Serious Risk of General War

9. While in Soviet theory and practice war is an acceptable, and on occasion necessary, instrument for attaining Communist objectives, the Kremlin presumably prefers if possible to attain its objectives by courses of action short of resort to general war. The Kremlin probably estimates that opportunities exist for making limited progress toward both its immediate and long-run objectives, at least during the period of this estimate, without provoking general war, because of:

a. The deterrent effect of the estimated Communist capability to overrun most of Eurasia at will;
b. The deterrent effect of Soviet capabilities for atomic warfare;
c. The divergent interests of the Western Powers; and
d. The general reluctance of the Western Powers to become involved in general war.

10. In discussing courses of action short of general war, it is necessary for clarity to examine each separately. Soviety policy envisages various courses of action—political warfare, limited Satellite or Soviet armed aggression, and even general war. While, therefore, separation for purposes of exposition is essential, the inseparable connection of all possible courses of action must be kept in mind.

A. Political Warfare

11. The Kremlin may consider the prospects of success by political warfare* sufficiently favorable to make other courses of action unnecessary. For example, with the immediate objective of dividing the Western Powers, undermining US mobilization, obstructing the NATO program and frustrating prospective German and Japanse rearmament and with the ultimate objective of paralyzing opposition to Communism, the Kremlin may fraudulently propose peaceful coexistence of the two systems and may encourage the West to hope for a settlement of outstanding issues by mutual agreement. In the vital area of Western Europe the Kremlin will almost certainly continue to press its "peace" campaign, to exploit the fear of war, to intimidate by display of force, to raise hopes of German unification, and to use the Communist Parties of France and Italy in an attempt to confound the political situation and obstruct effective government. Wherever elsewhere in the world non-Communist governments are weak, as in Iran, Indochina, and Burma, the Kremlin will almost certainly seek to strengthen the Communist position and, if favorable situations develop, will support Communist coups.

B. Employment of Chinese Communist Forces

12. The Kremlin might, during the period of this estimate, attempt to achieve some of its objectives by inducing the Chinese Communists to engage in additional military operations. Such operations would involve risk of general war between the US and the USSR, but the Kremlin might estimate that such operations could be so conducted that general war would not be precipitated.

* Political warfare, as here used, includes all manner of political and economic pressure, diplomatic action in the UN and elsewhere, propaganda and front activities, Communist Party and Communist-controlled trade union activities, support of all kinds of revolutionary movements, and psychological warfare.

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13. *Indochina and Burma.* In particular, the Kremlin may estimate that a Chinese Communist invasion of Indochina or Burma would not involve a serious risk of general war and that such an invasion would facilitate a Communist advance throughout Southeast Asia and the consequent denial of the resources of that area to the free world. The Chinese Communists almost certainly have the capability for conquering Burma. We consider an invasion of Burma possible, but we do not believe it probable during the period of this estimate. The Chinese Communists are now capable of overrunning virtually all of northern Indochina, and we consider an invasion of Indochina possible at any time.

14. *Taiwan.* The Kremlin probably estimates that the Chinese Communists alone do not have the capabilities for a successful invasion of Taiwan so long as the US policy of employing US fleet units for the defense of Taiwan remains unchanged. Under existing circumstances, the Kremlin must realize that active Soviet participation in an attack on Taiwan would substantially increase the risk of general war without necessarily ensuring the success of the operation. We therefore believe it unlikely that the USSR, in prevailing circumstances, would either encourage or participate in a Chinese Communist attack on Taiwan.

15. *Hong Kong and Macao.* Chinese Communist seizure of Hong Kong and Macao probably would be militarily easy, but would presently entail political and economic disadvantages for the Communists. If present conditions continue, we believe it unlikely that forceful seizure of these ports will take place during the period of this estimate.

C. Employment of European Satellite Forces

16. The Kremlin might, during the period here considered, attempt to achieve some of its objectives through local military operations by European Satellite forces. However, the Kremlin probably estimates that, because of the more direct impact on NATO interests, such operations would involve greater risk of general war between the US and the USSR than similar local operations by Chinese Communist forces.

17. *Yugoslavia.* The Kremlin undoubtedly attaches great importance to regaining control of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia is strategically important and is gradually developing close ties with the NATO powers. Titoism continues to be a potential menace to Soviet domination over the Satellites and over the world Communist movement. Satellite capabilities for launching an attack on Yugoslavia are steadily increasing. It is possible that the Kremlin regards the Yugoslav issue as of such importance as to warrant acceptance of the risks involved in a Satellite attack. However, in view of the increasing Western support of Yugoslavia, it is more probable that the Kremlin estimates that a Satellite attack would involve not only serious risk of war between the US or UN and the Satellites, but also the danger that such a conflict would develop into a general war between the US and the USSR. On balance, we believe a Satellite attack on Yugoslavia during the period of this estimate is possible, but not probable.

18. *Greece and Turkey.* Satellite capabilities for attack on Greece and particularly on Turkey are too limited for conquest of those countries. Furthermore, the Kremlin almost certainly realizes that an operation against either of these countries would probably entail US or UN intervention with the possibility of general war developing. We believe, therefore, that the USSR is unlikely to launch a Satellite attack on either Greece or Turkey during the period of this estimate.

19. *Berlin, West Germany, and Austria.* Satellite capabilities for military action against Allied forces in Berlin, West Germany, or Austria will probably remain so limited during the period here considered and the risk of general war involved in such action would be so great that the USSR is unlikely to launch a Satellite attack during this period.

D. Employment of Soviet Forces

20. The Kremlin must realize that commitment of major Soviet forces in any European Satellite or Chinese Communist operation would greatly increase the risk of general war between the US and the USSR. Wherever possible, therefore, the USSR would rely upon European Satellite or Chinese Communist

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forces for carrying out military operations against non-Communist areas. It undoubtedly would provide such forces with technical and logistical aid and might participate in rear area operations; if it considered the risk acceptable, it might even provide "volunteer" Soviet forces in the forward areas. Open Soviet military intervention, however, would be unlikely excepting in areas considered of great importance to the USSR and where Satellite forces are either unavailable or incapable of successful action.

21. *Greece and Turkey.* The Kremlin probably aims to secure control of Greece and Turkey in order to eliminate bases that could be used for attack on the Soviet orbit and at the same time to secure bases from which the position of the free world in the Near East might be threatened. However, the available Satellite forces alone are probably not capable of conquering Greece and certainly not capable of conquering Turkey. Therefore, such operations could be accomplished only with the active participation of Soviet forces. The Kremlin probably estimates that the US and UN almost certainly would come to the support of Greece and Turkey and that in those circumstances a general war between the US and the USSR would probably result. An attack on Greece or Turkey is therefore unlikely during the period of this estimate.

22. *Iran.* Of the areas where only Soviet forces are available for immediate employment, Iran is unstable and important. Soviet control of Iran would eliminate a potential base for hostile action against the USSR, would deprive the West of a vast oil supply, and would facilitate the subversion or conquest of the Near and Middle East. However, the Kremlin probably estimates that the political and economic instability and the widespread anti-British feeling offer good prospects of increasing Communist influence and eventually of establishing Communist control without direct Soviet intervention. Under these circumstances we believe it unlikely that the Kremlin would consider it necessary to incur the risk of war with the Western Powers involved in Soviet military intervention. But if the British should use military force in their dispute with Iran, the Kremlin might then invoke the 1921 treaty and occupy at least northern Iran, estimating that it could do so with relatively little risk of general war.

E. Employment of Soviet Forces Against US Forces

23. The Kremlin almost certainly estimates that overt and recognized commitment of Soviet forces against US forces in any area would involve not only a local war with the US, in which the US might well use atomic weapons, but also the strong probability of general war with the US, including a US strategic atomic attack on the USSR. Unless, therefore, the Kremlin had decided to accept general war with the US, we believe a Soviet attack on West Germany, Berlin, Austria, or Japan would be most unlikely during the period of this estimate.

24. If the Korean conflict continues or is renewed after a cease fire, the Kremlin will probably continue to aid the Communists in ways which the Kremlin estimates would not involve serious danger of a break between the USSR and US/UN. If, however, the Communist forces in Korea were threatened with decisive defeat, the Kremlin would probably intensify its aid. This aid might well include the introduction of "volunteer" forces. It might even include the employment of Soviet forces to such an extent that a *de facto* local war between the US/UN and the USSR would exist. At every stage the Kremlin will probably endeavor to keep open the possibility of ending the Korean conflict by political negotiation if the global interests of the USSR would be served by disengagement in Korea.

IV. Possibility of General War

25 Consideration of the degree of probability of Soviet military action in specific areas must be related to over-all Soviet strategy and policy. If the Kremlin should decide to precipitate or to accept general war, it might launch an attack in any area at any time and in any form as a prelude to such general war. Soviet forces are in an advanced state of war-readiness and could initiate general war at any time with little or no warning. The danger of general war exists now and will continue to

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exist so long as the USSR is in a position to take action which threatens, wholly or in part, the vital interests of the Western Powers.

26. We believe that the most important immediate objectives of the Kremlin are to divide the West and to halt Western, West German, and Japanese rearmament. If the Kremlin should fail to make sufficient progress toward that end by methods short of general war and if in addition it should become convinced that its superiority in conventional forces were about to be offset (whether through NATO and West German or Japanese rearmament or through Western advances in unconventional armaments), we believe the Kremlin would consider the advisability of precipitating general war. We believe it unlikely that the Kremlin would adopt this course of action so long as Western rearmament appeared to it only as a transitory impediment to further Soviet and Satellite expansion. On the other hand, if the Kremlin were to conclude that this rearmament threatened the vital interests of the USSR, we believe: (a) if it estimated that the USSR had sufficient means to wage war successfully and that the delay would tip the scales of power irretrievably against the USSR, the Kremlin would precipitate general war; but (b) if it estimated it did not have sufficient means to wage war successfully, the Kremlin would modify its policy and attempt to relax international tension until such time as the Western Powers relaxed their vigilance or other factors favorable to the USSR supervened. It is possible, however, that the USSR might precipitate war even under adverse circumstances if it considered the threat to its vital interests sufficiently real and immediate.

27. We do not believe that during the period of this estimate the Kremlin is likely to conclude that US, NATO, West German, and Japanese rearmament constitutes an immediate threat to the vital interests of the USSR. It is possible, however, that the Kremlin may at any time conclude that the Western rearmament program constitutes an eventual but already unacceptable threat to its vital interests, or that the Kremlin may at any time misinterpret Western defensive measures as indicating an imminent attack on the USSR.

28. There is, moreover, a serious possibility of general war developing within the period of this estimate from an action or series of actions not intended to produce that result. The Kremlin might, for example, miscalculate the degree of risk involved in a particular action or underestimate the cumulative effect of several actions. Or, it might regard a particular action as so necessary or so advantageous as to warrant assuming even a serious risk of general war.

29. We recognize the desirability and the importance of concluding this estimate with a simple and direct statement of the likelihood or unlikelihood that the Kremlin will deliberately precipitate or provoke general war between the US and the USSR during the period here covered. Existing intelligence does not enable us to make such a precise forecast. The USSR has the capability to launch general war and may decide to precipitate general war. Moreover, the international situation is so tense that at any time some issue might develop to a point beyond control.*

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* It is the view of the Director of Naval Intelligence, with respect to Section IV above, that the final paragraph of this estimate should read as follows:

"It is recognized that precise information on enemy intentions is rarely available and that enemy counteraction cannot be accurately predicted. However, all aspects of the Soviet problem considered, we believe it unlikely that the USSR will deliberately choose to precipitate or undergo the hazards of general war during the period covered by this estimate. Although the possibility of war by miscalculation cannot be discounted during periods of high international tension, we believe that in pursuing various courses of action short of war with the US, the USSR will seek to increase its power and damage the interests of the US whenever and wherever feasible, but will at every turn attempt to exploit each course of action with such caution as to avoid direct military aggression against the vital interests of the United States."

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